

CO-TOP PRACTICUM

A GUIDE FOR PARAEDUCATORS



1380 LAWRENCE ST., SUITE 650
DENVER, CO 80204-2076
PHONE: 303-556-6464
FAX: 303-556-6142
WWW.PARACENTER.ORG

SOME OF THIS PRACTICUM INFORMATION IS SPECIFIC TO THE STATE OF COLORADO.
IF YOU ARE USING IT IN A STATE OTHER THAN COLORADO YOU WILL NEED TO MODIFY IT.

The CO-TOP Practicum Experience Information Sheet

Overview. CO-TOP Paraeducator Certification requires 2 credit hours of field experience, each credit hour representing at least 90 hours in the field. Practicum credit hours may be taken one hour at a time, if needed.

Field experiences should balance out a person's previous experience to create a more marketable set of skills and a range of skills across ages, disabilities, grade levels, types of program or philosophical bases. It is recommended, but not required, that paraeducators seek experiences at both the elementary and the secondary levels.

There are three ways for a currently employed paraeducator to complete the required field experiences: (a) on the job, (b) at an exchange site, or (c) through a paid summer internship. Paraeducators will complete field experience requirements by taking two of the three options. A paraeducator who completes a field experience in her own setting will need to select either an exchange site or a summer practicum to complete the requirement.

In addition to the supervision provided by the cooperating teacher at the site, each paraeducator will receive at least 3 hours of monitoring and feedback from CO-TOP adjunct faculty.

On the job. The specifications for an on-the-job practicum include the following. The Paraeducator must:

- work with students who have disabilities.
- work under the supervision of a cooperating teacher who holds a valid teaching license with appropriate special education/ESL or Bilingual endorsement.
- work under the supervision of a CO-TOP adjunct faculty.
- obtain approval of the principal at the practicum site.

Exchange site. A paraeducator may participate in an exchange of placements with another paraeducator for field experience purposes providing that:

- the exchange site is approved by the CO-TOP adjunct faculty.
- the cooperating teacher at the exchange location is properly endorsed.
- both cooperating teachers agree to the exchange.
- the principals at both sites approve of the exchange.

Practicum Handbook. Each practicum participant will be provided a practicum handbook. The handbook will outline all components of the practicum experience. The handbook will be made available to each participant at the time of registration for the experience.

Guidelines for CO-TOP Practicum Responsibilities

	CO-TOP Adjunct Faculty	Cooperating Teacher	Paraeducator
1	Must be a CO-TOP trainer		Must have completed all CO-TOP classes in particular strand (SpEd/ELA/dual)
2	Set up practicum and logistics	Agree with practicum and logistics	Agree with practicum and logistics
3	Facilitate meeting outside of class time to begin practicum with cooperating teacher and paraeducator	Meet with adjunct faculty and paraeducator to discuss practicum	Meet with adjunct faculty and cooperating teacher to discuss practicum
4	Must facilitate use of PSA worksheets 1-3; all of worksheets (skills and confidence, program needs, comparison of program needs and skills /confidence, personalized job description, growth plan, evaluation) if possible	Complete professional work style analysis; Compare professional and paraeducator work style analysis; complete all worksheets (skills and confidence, program needs, comparison of program needs and skills /confidence, personalized job description, growth plan, evaluation) if possible	Complete paraeducator work style analysis
5		Schedule feedback conference and provide formative feedback to the paraeducator	
6	Support cooperating teacher in making written plans for paraeducator	Provide written plans for paraeducator	Ask cooperating teacher how he/she will give plans for working
7	Observe the paraeducator 3 times (one time can be initial meeting with cooperating teacher and paraeducator)		
8	Provide goals and objectives of CO-TOP curriculum to cooperating teacher	Assist paraeducator in developing realistic goals and objectives for practicum	Develop realistic goals and objectives for practicum
9			Develop practicum portfolio (see attached guidelines)
10	Read paraeducator journal and recommend grade for practicum		Provide adjunct faculty with practicum portfolio



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Checklist for a complete Practicum packet

1. _____ Paraeducator Practicum Checklist
2. _____ CO-TOP Practicum Application
3. _____ Cooperating Teacher Agreement
4. _____ Principal's Approval
5. _____ Registration Form for Extended Studies
6. _____ UCD Evaluation Form
7. _____ Proof of three hours of monitoring from CO-TOP adjunct faculty
8. _____ Portfolio including:
 - a. _____ Goals for practicum
 - b. _____ Program description
 - c. _____ Work Style Analysis (Professional, Paraeducator and Score Sheet)
 - d. _____ Journal
 - e. _____ Sample products
 - f. _____ Resume
 - g. _____ Transcript indicating # of academies completed

CO-TOP Adjunct Faculty Meeting Form

Meeting 1

Date/Time: _____

Notes:

Meeting 2

Date/Time: _____

Notes:

Meeting 3

Date/Time: _____

Notes:



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CO-TOP Practicum Application

The CO-TOP Practicum is designed as a culminating experience, therefore, paraeducators should have completed at least 90% of the courses in the program prior to applying for a practicum. Please complete the application .

Name

Home Phone:

First Name

Middle Name or Initial

Last Name

Home Address

Street

City

State

Zip

Applicant's Social Security Number:

Practicum Location:

Name of School / Agency

Street

City

State

Zip

School Phone #

Practicum Dates:

Practicum Type: ☐ On-the-job ☐ Traded Position ☐ ESY / Summer Program

Name of Cooperating Teacher:

☐ Signed form

Name of Principal at Practicum Location:

☐ Signed form

In the space below, write 2-3 goals for yourself. These goals describe what you would like most to learn or to improve during this practicum. The adjunct faculty and cooperating teacher should assist in goal development.

Applicant Signature:

CO-TOP Adjunct Faculty:



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Cooperating Teacher Agreement



Date: _____

I agree to supervise _____ (paraeducator) who is completing the requirements of the CO-TOP Certificate through the University of Colorado at Denver during the _____ semester, 200____. I understand that the paraeducator must be coached, mentored and supported on a daily basis.

I accept this responsibility and verify that I am a currently licensed teacher, and hold the following endorsement(s) _____. I understand that I will be responsible for the following:

1. Meet with the CO-TOP adjunct faculty and paraeducator to discuss the practicum.
2. Complete the Professional Work Style Analysis and the Work Style Analysis Score Sheet.
3. Assist the paraeducator in developing goals for the practicum.
4. Provide written plans for the paraeducator

I also agree to meet and confer with the CO-TOP adjunct faculty who will meet with the practicum student at least three times during the practicum. I agree to provide a written evaluation of the practicum student at the end of the practicum. I understand I will be paid an honorarium of \$_____ upon completion of these services.

I agree to alert the CO-TOP adjunct faculty of any problems or concerns that arise with the practicum student's performance or conduct.

Cooperating Teacher's Signature
(Please return signed form to paraeducator)



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Principal Approval Form



Date: _____

I approve the practicum experience arranged between _____
_____ (practicum student) and the CO-TOP program at the University
of Colorado at Denver for the _____ semester, 200____. I understand
that the practicum student must be coached, mentored and supported on a regular basis by
the cooperating teacher.

I approve _____ (cooperating teacher's
name) as the cooperating teacher and verify that she or he currently holds the following
endorsement(s): _____. I understand that the cooperating teacher will be
responsible for the following:

1. Meet with the adjunct faculty and paraeducator to discuss the practicum.
2. Complete the Professional Work Style Analysis and the Work Style Analysis Score Sheet.
3. Assist the paraeducator in developing goals for the practicum.
4. Provide written plans for the paraeducator

I understand that the CO-TOP adjunct faculty will visit the practicum student at
least three times during the practicum.

I agree to alert the CO-TOP adjunct faculty of any problem or concerns that arise
with the practicum student's performance or conduct.

Principal's Signature
(Please return signed form to paraeducator)



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Requirements for Practicum Portfolio

Content:

1. Develop written goals for the practicum with the assistance of the CO-TOP adjunct faculty and the cooperating teacher.
2. Write a description of the program where you will be doing your practicum.
3. Work style analysis. This included Professional's Work Style, Paraeducator's Work Style and Work Style Score Sheet and will be facilitated by the CO-TOP adjunct faculty.
4. Keep a reflective journal that includes at least one entry per academy that describes application of skills learned from that academy (a total of 15 entries for a dual certificate, 12 entries for Special Education certificate, 11 entries for English Language Acquisition certificate).
 - a. Reflections should include:
 - i. The name of the academy / goal / objective being addressed
 - ii. Why you chose this activity
 - iii. Nature of the activity
 - iv. Procedure (preparation and delivery)
 - v. How this activity / lesson impacted the student's learning
 - vi. What contributed to the success of this activity / lesson
 - vii. What difficulties you encountered, if any
 - viii. What changes / modifications you might look for in the future; changes / modification you might use with another student
 - ix. What impact this activity / lesson had on your learning
 - x. Your personal ideas, thoughts, feelings and considerations about this activity. Did this activity / lesson encourage greater learning or thinking in areas not necessarily represented in the activity?

Note: Reflection may take time. After completing i. Through iv., give yourself some reflective thinking time before responding to v. through x. An example of a

reflective journal is attached, but feel free to make this reflective journal work for you.

5. Include sample products, such as student generated materials, paraeducator generated materials, samples of personal teaching tools, video clips, artwork, creative writing samples, etc.
6. Resume (see attached sample).
7. Official transcript indicating all classes are complete.

Presentation:

1. Keep goals (#1 above) reflective journal (#2 above) in 3-ring notebook.
2. Journal can be typed or handwritten.
3. Include other materials (#2 above) with notebook in large box or envelope for submission to The PAR²A Center, 1380 Lawrence Street, Suite 650, Denver, CO 80204-2076.

Grading:

A = Written goals for practicum; 15 journal entries addressing every academy (12 entries if completing Special Education or 11 entries if completing English Language Acquisition certificates); sample products from practicum; attend all conferences / meetings required for practicum.

B = Written goals for practicum; 12 journal entries (10 entries for Special Education certificate, 9 entries for English Language Acquisition certificate); sample products from practicum; attend all conferences / meetings required for practicum

Not meeting requirements for a grade of A or B will result in an Incomplete.

Note: Grades are **NOT** based on spelling, grammar, or typewritten journals, but are graded on content and completeness.

Sample Reflection Journal

1. Academy: Instructional Strategies

The name of the activity / lesson that I chose is “Levels of Support” from goal...., objective....

1. Rationale for choosing this activity: I chose this activity because I noticed when taking the academy that I had never thought about how to fade the levels of support that I had given to students. I thought that when I was assigned to a student that I was expected to help that student do the activity and complete the lesson. I never thought about the true goal of teaching the student to be independent.

2. Nature of the activity: I chose to use an activity that I have been doing with a student all year. I have been helping that student get off the bus and to his classroom every day. I have set up a plan with the teacher to fade my assistance until the student is able to do this independently.

3. Procedure: First I spoke with my supervising (mentor) teacher about what I should do for an activity about levels of support. She looked through the material and suggested I look at something with Sonny because he is a new student who had always had a one-to-one paraeducator. We were trying to decrease some of that support because he would be going to middle school next year and we did not think he needed that much support.

Next I chose an activity that I thought would be important for Sonny to learn before going to middle school. I spoke with my supervising (mentor) teacher about decreasing how much I support Sonny getting off the bus and to class. She thought it was a good idea and created a data sheet to record the process. I asked her if I could make the data sheet because I wanted the experience. She said that would be great because it addressed one of the goals on Sonny’s IEP, and asked that I show it to her when I was done. We talked about what should be included on the data sheet and what the plan could be if Sonny wasn’t able to do this on his own, and how I should explain all of this to Sonny before we started doing it.

I explained to Sonny that he would need to start walking from the bus to class by himself. I told him that I would be in the area to make sure he was safe but that I would not walk right beside him. My plan was to start there and then to fade to less assistance and to finally just shadow him until I saw that he could do it by himself.

I used a spreadsheet on the computer to make the data sheet. I had to make several different ones until I made one that I thought covered all of the things we had talked about. When I showed it to my supervising (mentor) teacher she said it looked great. I have included an empty copy of it in my portfolio, and a copy of one with data.

4. Impact on the student: It took only 3 weeks for Sonny to become completely independent getting off the bus and walking to class. At first he looked around for me when the bus stopped, and one time he was late for class because he got distracted at the water fountain. I saw that he was distracted and at first I thought I should tell him to go to class, but that was not part of the plan that the teacher and I had written up. The teacher made him stay after class for 5 minutes to make up the time that he had missed. The best part was that

he started walking to class with another student and it looks like they are becoming friends. Not only did Sonny learn to be more independent, he also made a new friend.

5. Contributions to success of this activity: I think several things contributed to the success of this activity. The data sheet helped to keep me on track of what we were expecting from Sonny and I didn't have to worry about whether I was doing the right thing. Talking with the teacher about what to do if he was late to class before it happened made it easier for me to watch and wait instead of helping. When I made the data sheet, I had to think carefully about what all of the steps we would need to take to help Sonny become independent. Having a plan made it so much easier.

6. Difficulties encountered: One of the biggest problems I had with this activity was making the data sheet. I had used a computer before, but had never made a spreadsheet. It took several tries before I got one that I felt we could use.

7. Changes / modifications / use with other students: I don't know if I should make any changes in with I did with Sonny, but I have looked at how often I help Theresa at lunch. I think I will talk with the teacher about how I should fade some of the support I give her. She needs a lot more help than Sonny so I'm not sure where I should start.

8. Impact on my learning: I learned many things while completing this activity with Sonny. I learned some practical things like how to make a spreadsheet that covered all of the parts of the data that we would like to have. I also learned that it is really hard to let students make mistakes, but if we don't let them make mistakes and then figure out how to correct those mistakes, they can't learn to be independent. Probably the most important thing that I have learned is to look at my "level of support" and to ask myself if that is helping a student learn to be independent, or am I helping too much. I am constantly analyzing where I can make decisions to fade my support to let kids increase their independence.

9. Personal thoughts: This activity changed how I look at my job. Instead of helping kids with lessons like math and writing, I look at helping kids become more independent. The teacher and I have a better relationship and now we seem like more of a team. I also see how helping Sonny off the bus and into the classroom prevented him from making friendships. I think this activity helped me to be a better teacher because I now look at what I do with my students and think about whether they can be more independent and how I can help them to get there.

23456 Street
A town, State, 00000

Phone 800.234.5678
E-mail patp@email.world

Patricia Paraeducator

- Objective** (example) A career assisting students in public school system
- Education** (example) Certificate of Completion, COTOP Curriculum
University of Colorado, Denver, CO 80204
- Awards received** (example) Paraeducator of the Month, November, 2002, Local School District
District award for "above and beyond", March, 2000, Local School District
Community Achievement Award, July, 1999, Local Community
- Work experience** Job Title
Dates of Employment
Company/Institution Name/Address /Phone number
[list previous 3-5 years experiences if other than first]
- Volunteer experience** (example) Special Olympics, 2000. 2001 and 2002
Girl Scout Leader, 1998- present
Reading Tutor, 2000- present, Local School District, Second grade
- References** List 2 professional and 1 personal reference:
Name/Position/Address/Phone number